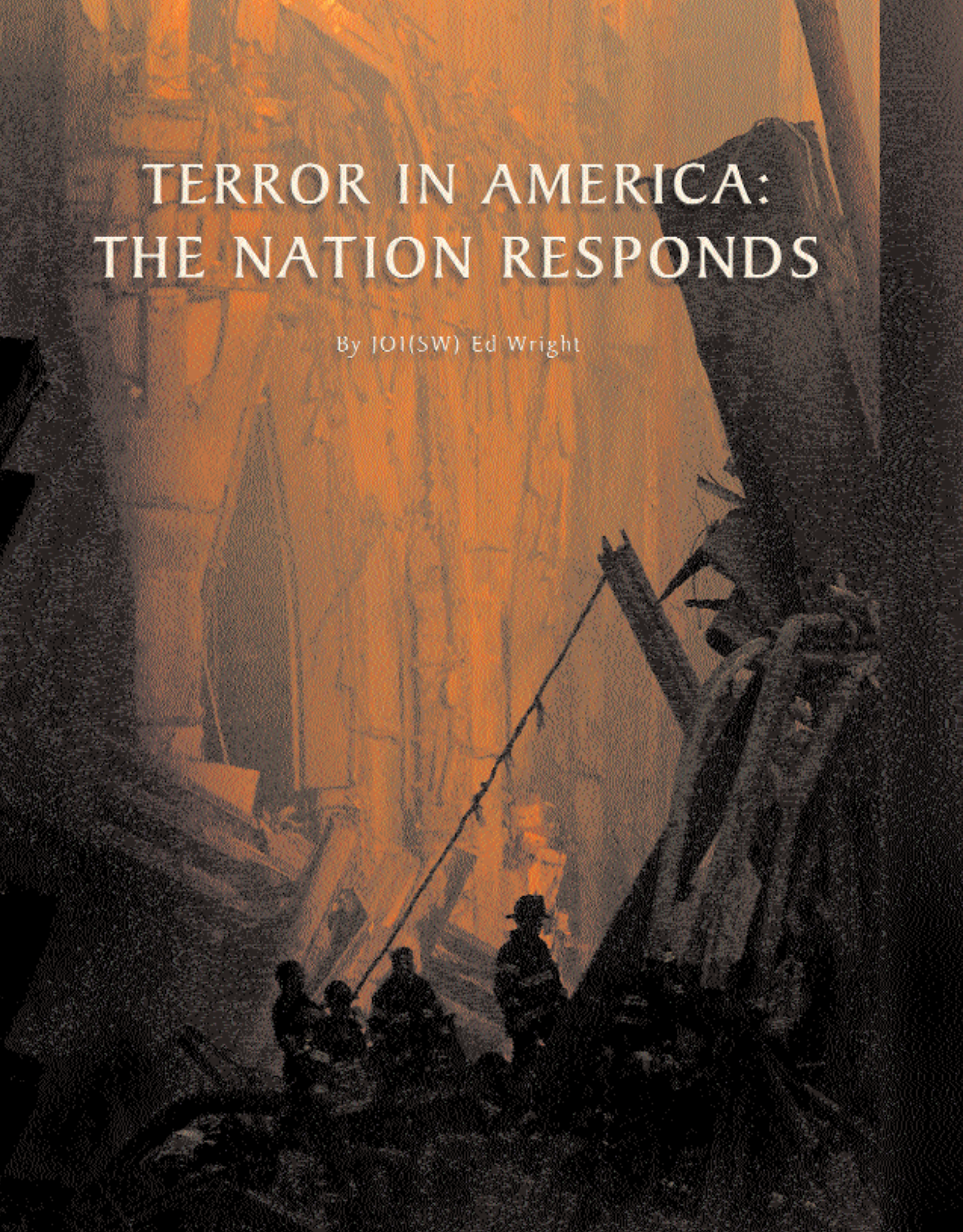


# TERROR IN AMERICA: THE NATION RESPONDS

By JOI(SW) Ed Wright





Tuesday, 11 September, started out much like any day in America. Employees at the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon outside Washington, D.C., were reporting to work as they did each weekday. But this morning would evolve into a day that will live forever in the hearts and minds of people the world over. Even the disastrous Sunday at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on 7 December 1941 could not match the events that were about to unfold.

As the morning progressed, America's greatest fears were confirmed. Terrorists had hijacked four U.S. airliners to use in an air assault against prominent national targets. All passengers aboard were sacrificed.

The attacks began at 0845 when American Airlines Flight 11 from Boston, Mass., struck the north tower of the World Trade Center, ripping a hole in the giant building and setting it on fire. Employees scrambled for the exits as the 110-floor superstructure began to burn. Americans all over the world were shocked and horrified as the pictures were played and replayed on worldwide TV.

Opposite, rescue workers descend deep into the rubble of the World Trade Center (PH2 Jim Watson). Above, smoke and flames rise over the Pentagon late into the night of 11 September following the attack by a U.S. airliner commandeered by terrorists (PH2 Bob Houlihan).



PH1 Mark D. Faram

Left, medical personnel load wounded into an ambulance at the first medical triage area set up outside the Pentagon after a hijacked commercial airliner crashed into the southwest side of the building. Below, a New York City firefighter gazes at what remains of the World Trade Center after its collapse following the 11 September terrorist attack.



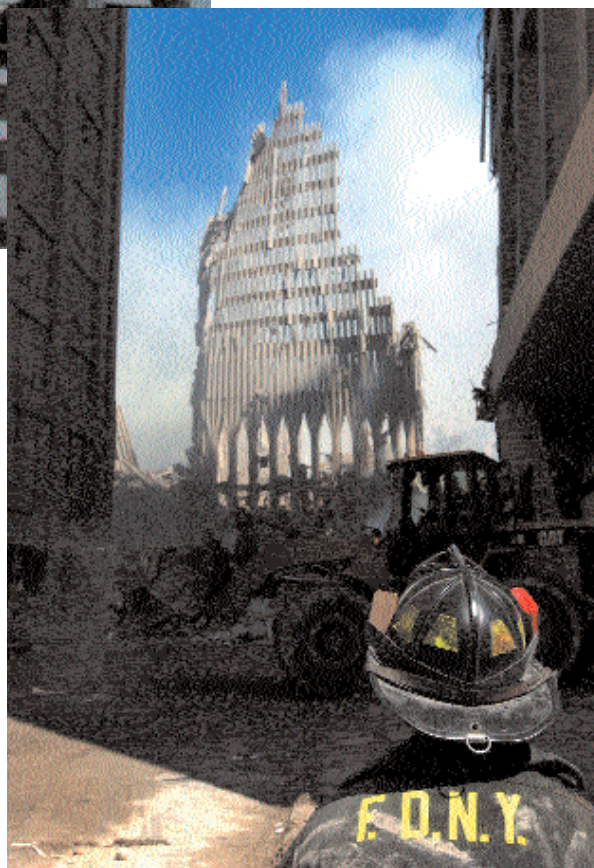
PH2 Bob Houlihan

Above, a 200-foot gash exposes interior sections of the Pentagon after the terrorist attack. Right, AGC(sel) Robert Pitchi, right, and AG1 Paul McKenna stock food and beverages for distribution to rescue workers at the Pentagon. Below right, President George W. Bush thanks search and rescue personnel at the Pentagon during a visit on 12 September.



PH1 Michael W. Pendergrass

The first questions asked were "What or who caused this?" and "Could this have been an accident?" Eighteen minutes later, a surreal instant replay took place when a second commercial airliner originating in Boston, United Airlines Flight 175, hit the south tower and exploded, setting the second building ablaze. As firemen and police responded to the burning buildings, measures were being taken to prevent further incidents. Federal Aviation Administration officials, worried about the threat of further flight problems, immediately shut down flight operations at all U.S. airports.



PH2 Jim Watson



R. D. Ward

Inbound transatlantic flights into the United States were diverted to Canada. All bridges and tunnels leading out of New York and New Jersey were closed.

At 0943, while the world watched these events unfolding, the Pentagon was attacked. American Airlines Flight 77, the third hijacked plane, crashed into the huge military office complex, sending up billowing black smoke and turning one section of the building into an inferno.

Meanwhile, horrified employees, tourists and onlookers in New York City ran for their lives as the badly damaged south tower of the World Trade Center collapsed. Many employees and emergency personnel who had responded to the scene were crushed under the rubble.

At 1010, United Airlines Flight 93, the fourth hijacked plane, crashed in Somerset County, Pa. The hijackers' attempt to strike an unknown landmark on the East Coast was thwarted. Apparently, passengers were able to overtake the terrorists and prevent the plane from hitting its target.

At 1028 the north tower collapsed, filling the streets of New York City with more debris and further hindering rescue efforts by emergency personnel.

Ever resilient, America began to put the pieces back together. In his response to the attacks, President George W. Bush emphasized, "Make no mistake. The United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts. The U.S. government will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed the acts and those who harbor them." He urged Americans to begin the healing and recovery process.

The next day Pentagon employees went back to work

and military personnel were ordered on high alert.

Military bases throughout the country were restricted to base employees only. Museums and theme parks were shut down. Any location that might attract a large crowd was closed until security measures could be put into effect.

The aircraft carriers *George Washington* (CVN 73) and *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67) were dispatched to New York to provide security and other assistance. The hospital ship *Comfort* (T-AH 20) left her home port of Baltimore, Md., and arrived in New York City to provide help in the relief effort. *Comfort* was originally assigned to perform hospital work but her mission changed shortly after getting underway. The ship was converted from a major medical facility to a logistical and support facility to aid firefighters and emergency personnel working in the disaster relief effort. The workers were provided hot meals, fresh clothes and beds. Meanwhile, the process began to recall some 50,000 reservists to provide domestic security.



PH3 J. Scott Campbell



PH3 J. Scott Campbell



PH1 Dominick Haen

Top, COMSECONDFLT VAdm. J. C. Dawson and staff arrive aboard *George Washington* (CVN 73) to plan contingency operations after the terrorist attacks. Above, with smoke from the World Trade Center as a backdrop, *GW* stands at the ready off the coast. Left, *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67) takes on fuel during an underway replenishment at sea with USNS *John Lenthall* (T-AO 189), while *Hue City* (CG 66) comes alongside.



PH2 Corey Lewis

Above, Tactical Action Officer LCdr. Dean Matousek surveys the air and surface space around New York City from the Combat Direction Center on board *George Washington* (CVN 73). Right, an E-2C *Hawkeye* of Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 125 lands aboard the carrier for contingency operations after the terrorist attacks.



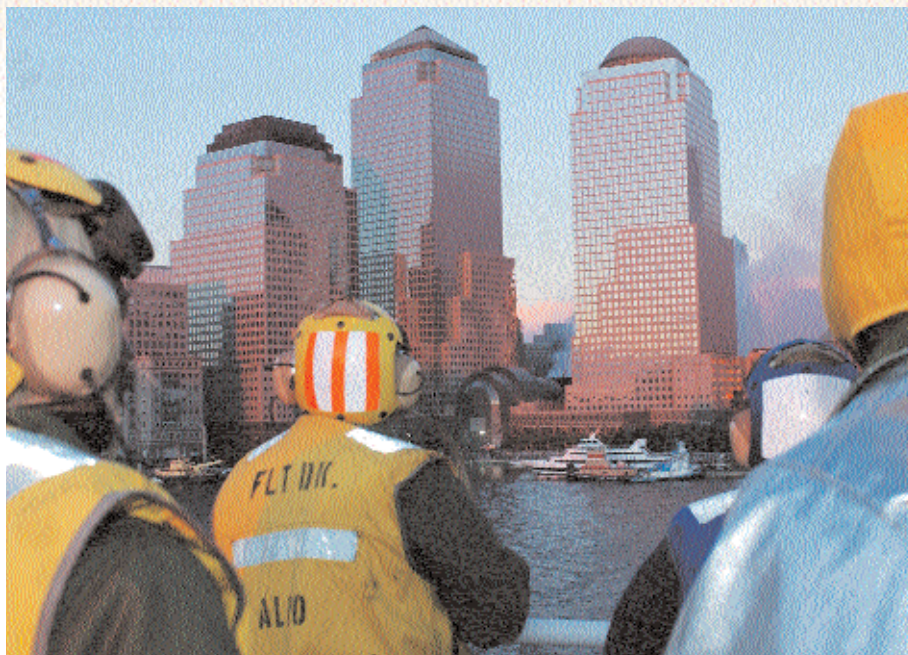
PH2 Lisa Marcus

From the White House, President Bush addressed the nation, stating, "Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the American resolve."

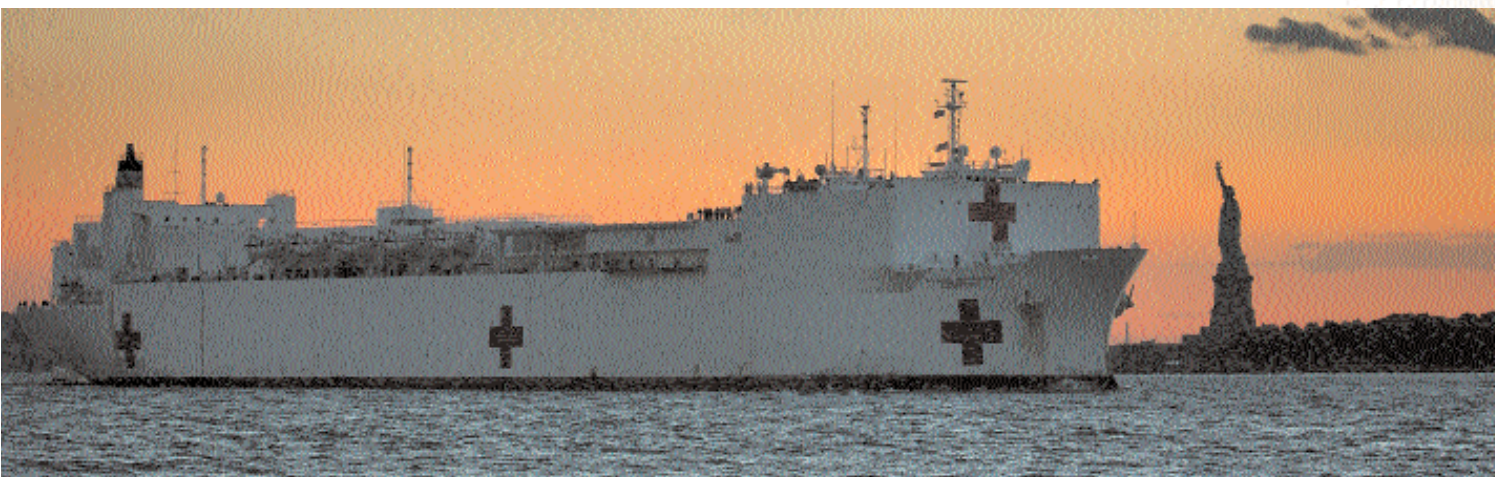
Americans and people from all nations and walks of life were stunned that these horrific events could happen in America, considered the safest country on earth. The World Trade Center, the American icon of free trade, had been demolished; the Pentagon, the symbol of security, had been ripped open. People from 80 different countries lost their lives in the World Trade Center, giving the tragedy a global effect.

The president declared a state of national emergency on 14 September, and he was empowered by Congress to use all force necessary to protect Americans and eliminate the threat of global terrorism.

The outpouring of care, love and help from the American people began soon after the attacks took place. American Red Cross blood banks filled with people offering to donate blood and to volunteer in any capacity. The overwhelming number of cash donations prompted the creation of various funds to aid the families of the victims.



Top, Navy medical personnel aboard the hospital ship USNS *Comfort* (TA-H 20) provide care to rescue workers at the World Trade Center. Left, Sailors aboard *Comfort* in New York's Hudson River view smoke and building destruction caused by the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. Below, *Comfort* passes the Statue of Liberty en route to Manhattan.



JO1 Preston Keres

It is uncertain how long the cleanup efforts will take in New York and Washington, but one thing is certain: America withstood this punch from the terrorists and will fight as a united and strong country. It is said that history repeats itself. As always, America will rise to

the challenge. ✈️

Right, Naval Aviation responds to the crisis in America—*Enterprise* (CVN 65), top, and *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70) meet briefly in the waters of the Arabian Gulf. *Enterprise* was extended in the region following the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington.

